

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier version and listings.

1. (currently amended): A signature processing method for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising:

an inputting step of inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step of displaying the inputted stroke of the signature and a background pattern being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit, wherein the background pattern is a pattern which in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet allowing the user to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.

2. (previously presented): A signature processing method according to Claim 1, further comprising a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control step is executed in response to a determination in said determining step that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control step includes displaying, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is determined in said determining step that the instruction is not given.

3. (previously presented): A signature processing method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a registering step, of registering the signature inputted in said inputting step.

4. (currently amended): A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein, in said control step, includes displaying the stroke of the signature is displayed at the color similar to a color of the background pattern by using a combination of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.

5. (currently amended): A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein ~~said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background~~ pattern displayed in said control step is a hatched pattern in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

6. (canceled).

7. (currently amended): A signature processing method according to Claim

1, wherein ~~said control step includes displaying only a portion~~ portions near the beginning point and the end point of the stroke of the signature are displayed in said control step in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

8. (currently amended): A signature processing method for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising: ~~according to Claim 7, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is~~

an inputting step of inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step of displaying a portion of the stroke input within a predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time, and deleting the display of the other portions of the stroke.

9. (canceled).

10. (previously presented): A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

11. - 31. (canceled).

32. (currently amended): A signature processing apparatus for displaying a

signature on a display unit, comprising:

inputting means for inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

control means for displaying inputted stroke of the signature and a background pattern being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit, wherein the background pattern is a pattern which in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer by said inputting means, while yet allowing the user to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is inputted via the digitizer by said inputting means.

33. (previously presented): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, further comprising determining means for determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control means operates in response to a determination by said determining means that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control means displays, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is determined by said determining means that the instruction is not given.

34. (previously presented): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, further comprising:

registering means for registering the signature inputted by said inputting means.

35. (currently amended): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays the stroke of the signature at the color similar to a color of the background pattern ~~by using a combination of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.~~

36. (currently amended): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein ~~said control means displays the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background~~ pattern displayed by said control means is a hatched pattern in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

37. (canceled).

38. (previously presented): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays only a portion of the stroke of the signature in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

39. (currently amended): A signature processing apparatus for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising: according to Claim 38, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is

inputting means for inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

control means for displaying a portion of the stroke input within a predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time, and deleting the display of the other portions of the stroke.

40. (canceled).

41. (previously presented): A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

42. (currently amended): A signature processing program for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising:

an inputting step, of inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying the inputted stroke of the signature and a background pattern being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit, wherein the background pattern is a pattern which in a manner that makes it difficult for others to

discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet allowing the user to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.

43. (previously presented): A signature processing program according to Claim 42, further comprising a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control step is executed in response to a determination in said determining step that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control step includes displaying, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is determined in said determining step that the instruction is not given.

44. A signature processing program according to Claim 42, further comprising:

a registering step, of registering the signature inputted in said inputting step.

45. (currently amended): A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein, in said control step, includes displaying the stroke of the signature is displayed at the color similar to a color of the background pattern by using a combination

~~of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.~~

46. (currently amended): A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein ~~said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background~~ pattern displayed in said control step is a hatched pattern ~~in a manner~~ that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

47. (canceled).

48. (currently amended): A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein ~~said control step includes displaying only a portion~~ portions near the beginning point and the end point of the stroke of the signature are displayed in said control step in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

49. (currently amended): A signature processing program for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising: ~~according to Claim 48, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is~~

an inputting step, of inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying a portion of the stroke input within a



predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time, and deleting the display of the other portions of the stroke.

50. (canceled).

51. (previously presented): A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

52. (currently amended): A computer-readable storage medium storing a signature processing program, the program comprising:

an inputting step, of inputting a signature on the display unit, the signature being handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying the inputted stroke of the signature and a background pattern being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit, wherein the background pattern is a pattern which in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet allowing the user to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.